WHAT IS AN ARTIFICIAL REEF

An artificial reef is a manmade structure created to mimic some of the characteristics of a typical natural reef that would exist within the area.

ARTIFICIAL REEF BENEFITS

Artificial reefs increase hardbottom habitat and create suitable substrate for colonization by marine fish, crustaceans and encrusting organisms which augments the total area of quality reef habitat. Artificial reefs also create beautiful marine habitat for scuba diving/snorkeling and sport fishing opportunities which boosts the local economy. A study by Florida Sea Grant, shows within Manatee County, annual reef expenditures by users is just over 23 million dollars.

ARTIFICIAL REEF PROGRAM

Manatee County has been involved in reef construction since the late 1960’s and currently has 11 artificial reefs with two more soon to be constructed. The County’s major objectives in constructing artificial reefs are to create an underwater environment that balances public-user group interests, such as fishing and diving with resource conservation and minimal environmental impact.

Parks and Natural Resources Department
Natural Resources Division
Marine Resources
5002 33rd Avenue Drive West
Bradenton, FL 34209

May 2017

Scan the code to view underwater video footage and side scan sonar maps!

Scan the code to view boat ramp video, pictures and amenities!
RECENT & FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS

In 2016, additional reef modules were added to Whale Key, Bayshore North and South Reefs. In August 2017 a new natural limestone boulder reef, Borden Reef, will be completed. Another, soon to be in the works project is Bridge Reef. This reef will contain materials from the old Skyway Bridge.

7 MILE NORTH

Material was initially deployed in 2007 and contains over 1,000 tons of concrete culvert/rubble/pilings, prefabricated reef modules, utility poles, limestone boulders, boat molds and bridge segments. The reef has an average depth of 40 feet with a vertical relief that approaches 15 feet in some areas.

3 MILE NORTH

Material consists of concrete rubble and culvert, prefabricated reef modules and a small barge. In 2004, Manatee High School students and the Research Institute of Florida constructed and donated reef modules. In 2011, Old Skyway Fishing Bridge material was also deployed. This well established reef sits at an averaging depth of 30 feet with vertical relief varying from 3 to 10 feet.

7 MILE SOUTH

The reef is well developed with concrete rubble and prefabricated reef modules as well as a steel hulled barge and a sailboat. These materials provide 3 to 6 feet of relief above the sandy bottom. Water depth averages 35 to 40 feet.

3 MILE SOUTH

A well established reef consisting of patches of concrete rubble, culvert, and light poles as well as a large number of prefabricated reef modules. Structural relief averages 3 to 12 feet in water approximately 30 feet deep.

1 MILE

Material was initially deployed in 1992 and 1993. This reef has depths around 18 to 20 feet with vertical relief of 1 to 4 feet. The reef contains over 18,000 tons of old Skyway Bridge material within the northern portion of the reef and numerous reef modules within the southern section of the reef area.

REEF ETIQUETTE

- Share and respect the reef environment.
- Give both diving and fishing vessels room to enjoy their activities without overcrowding.
- Stay 300' away from vessels displaying Diver Down Flag and understand divers may be as far as 300' away from the their vessel.
- Don’t litter and please pickup any litter/debris you might find.
- Catch and Release will help increase fish stocks, but if you are keeping your fish be sure to follow size and bag limits set by FWC (http://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/)

TYPICAL FISH SPECIES

Illustrations © Diane Rome Peebles

- Goliath Grouper (Prohibited)
- Gag Grouper
- Nassau Grouper (Prohibited)
- Red Grouper
- Mangrove Snapper
- Lane Snapper
- Sheepshead
- White Grunt
- Hogfish
- Snook

NEAR SHORE AND BAY REEFS

Manatee County’s near shore and bay reefs (Bayshore north, south and Whale Key Reefs) share many similar environmental characteristics. Maximum water depths average 12 to 15 feet while visibility is typically less than 10 feet. Habitat enhancement has been achieved primarily through the deployment of prefabricated reef modules. These near shore reefs provide critical year round habitat for the juveniles of prized fish such as snapper and grouper as well as seasonal haunts for larger individuals. These near shore reefs also provide ideal habitat for a wide array of invertebrates, including important species such as blue crab and stone crab.

ANCHORING ON REEFS

- Help protect our Artificial Reefs.
- NEVER drop anchor directly on any known structure.
- Pay attention to wind and current so you know how your vessel will lay. Checking your GPS track will help you determine drift direction.
- Anchor into the current and along side any known structure.
- Be sure to leave plenty of scope in order to keep the anchor from dragging.
- If you are scuba diving, take the opportunity to dive down and check your anchor placement as a start to your dive.

LOCAL RESOURCES